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The Total Filmmaker: thinking of screenwriting, directing and editing as one role

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ABSTRACT

As screenwriting continues to establish itself as a discrete discipline in academia, either in alignment with creative writing departments or film and media practice departments, there is a danger that such developments may entrench a distancing of the craft from the cinematic form itself and that such a distancing may ultimately reinforce the screenplay's propensity for dramaturgy and the dramatic, rather than the sensory and experiential of the cinematic.

Closely related creative stages in telling cinematic stories include directing and editing and this article seeks to argue, with reference to personal screen practice, that screenwriting, directing and editing are, in fact, three variations of the same thing. The article proposes the notion of the Total Filmmaker who embraces all three aspects of the cinematic storyteller.

If the ultimate aim is to create a narrative that fully utilises the unique properties of the cinematic form in telling a story, rather than being dominated by the theatricality of dramatically driven classical narratives, how might one explore the relationship between screenwriting, directing and editing? Can an integrated approach to creating the cinematic blueprint change the way we think of pedagogy and screenwriting?

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> My movie is born first in my head, dies on paper; is resuscitated by the living persons and real objects I use, which are killed on film but, placed in a certain order and projected onto a screen, come to life again like a flower in water. (Bresson 1977, 7)

The beginning: a changing context

The idea of the Total Filmmaker allows us to move away from the quagmire of debates around the notion of the auteur, first articulated by Truffaut in his essay *Une certaine tendance au cinéma français* (Truffaut 1954) as he wrestled with where authorship sits in a collaborative art form firmly rooted in industrial processes and institutions. Instead, perhaps we can look to what happened to football in the 1960s and 1970s Netherlands, where the

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football manager, Rinus Michels, developed a highly successful theory and strategy, first conceived by Jack Reynolds, of flexible and interchangeable outfield players able to reshape, reinvent and respond to ever changing game circumstances.[1] Like in the film industry, up until that point football had been dominated by practises, even dogmas, and about rigid positions, which only varied when the occasional genius footballer would pop up. The industrial model of filmmaking, exclusive and largely determined by technological and financial constraints, shaped divisions of labour along technological and procedural fault lines. Our subsequent teaching and learning – as well as research – discourses tend to reflect this original order to this day and in this paper I wish to first challenge, through my own production practice and the context to those practices, the notion of screenwriting, directing and editing being discrete disciplines and, second, to propose the idea of the Total Filmmaker as not only a reality of independent filmmaking, but a desirable reality in the ongoing development of quality cinema. I hope to articulate a suggestion that current dominant approaches to thinking of the screenplay and screenwriting – and consequently the teaching of screenwriting – limit the cinematic expression to a paradigm rooted in the idea of the cause and effect of drama and conflict. Cinematic narratives that deviate from this paradigm, such as my own narratives which explore more transcendent engagement with stories of the everyday, struggle with the screenplay as being separate from directing and editing.

Industrial situations emphasise the idea of large complex teams building a product. Not least because by spreading roles and responsibilities, particularly in the areas of screenwriting, directing and editing, investors are spreading risk and minimising single points of failure. In fact, few investors on large-scale projects invest in a project that has not first successfully established itself in another form, such as novel, play, comic, news item or celebrity story. The producer sits across the whole process and manages the creative articulation of a story. The complexity of satisfying producers, directors and investors often leads to large film projects and TV series going through several screenwriters or, indeed, writing in teams, which in turn often means genre or formulas dominate what is produced. Usually, specific genre, supported increasingly by biometric analysis, underpin and frame the project with each stage of the process carefully monitored by the investors and their representatives. It is in the interest of investors to reinforce the clear stages: idea, proof of concept, development, production, postproduction, testing and compliance, distribution and exhibition. Each of these complex stages will have sub stages and, as we all know, very many people are involved. Perhaps it is no surprise that with so many people involved, and so much at stake for everyone, the status quo is reinforced and progress is measured primarily in terms of refinement.

In this kind of process, the screenplay is an industrial blueprint. It is used to sell, persuade, and provide information for budgeting, casting, production design, performance and so on. It is worth reminding ourselves that we are usually talking about a single document performing all these roles: the screenplay. For the screenplay to satisfy this complex array of demands, it has evolved a particularly sparse set of conventions to achieve the challenging objectives of, on the one hand, giving us enough detail to imagine a film, while on the other hand, not giving too much detail that might infringe on the work of others, such as the director, production designer, cinematographer and editor. Given all these demands and challenges, the standard screenplay format and its conventions (especially in the Anglo Saxon cinema) have proved particularly resilient. These

conventions have not changed much over many decades. However, the recent democratisation of filmmaking and distribution brought about by the digital revolution, and the need to take advantage of this democratisation in order to encourage diversity and innovation, necessitates an examination of how we consider and teach screenwriting. Two particular problems come to mind. First, the problem of limited imagination and the screenplay. Second, the related problem of the dominance of genre defined screenplays and the dramaturgy of classical narratives.

Surely, as the screenwriter commences the writing of a screenplay, the imagery of the film plays out in the writer's minds eye. The film lives in the imagination, excites and moves the creator to write a shorthand version down on paper. As Bresson suggests (Bresson 1977, 7), the film 'dies'. Perhaps the wise Islamic mystics had this in mind when decreeing that to represent Allah as an image be forbidden as it would reduce the living presence of God to something it was not. Or perhaps, like in quantum theories of Max Planck[2] and Niels Bohr[3], our measurements and understanding of sub atomic particles are dependent on the instruments we use to observe them. In both cases, the strong suggestion is that the intangible object of observation is defined by the limits of our tools and our imagination. One could say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder.[4]

The decision makers evaluating and advising on a screenplay will consequently see what their imagination conjures up. It will be shaped by their experience and their understanding of film language. That new vision of the screenplay will then be shaped by the careful selection of director, cinematographer, editor and so on, and what eventually ends up on the screen may or may not live up to the original vision of the screenwriter. On larger scale projects where risks are high, the imagination that shapes the screenplay through the hiring and firing of screenwriters, appointments of script editors and the intervention of producers, will be focused on the shape of past successes, the easy identification of genre and sales pitches and, particularly relevant to this discussion, the form of the cinematic narrative.

With these priorities in mind, the standard screenplay format and practice focuses attention on action and dialogue. In fact, the word 'play' suggests the link to the role of the play in performance and the classical narrative film is often referred to as a performance, suggesting the focus on the dramaturgy of the performers. This leads to what Bresson calls 'photographed theatre' (Bresson 1977, 37). While screenwriters might do their best to subtly hint at the visuals (including the audio visual presence of the screen characters), the sounds, the mise-en-scéne and the montage, the main expectations of a screenwriter revolve around issues of narrative structure, character actions, character dialogue, character motivations and character arcs. A relatively limited palette of tools related to character psychology and motivation and their subsequent story arcs dominate most how-to books on screenwriting. Even attempts at deviating from the dominant paradigm, often utilising the mythological studies of Joseph Campbell (2012), such as Amnon Buchbinder's *The Way Of The Screenwriter* (2005) and Christopher Vogler's *The Writer's Journey* (1998), keep returning to the core elements that make the dominant classical screenplay work: character, plot, action, psychological cause and effect and self assertive narrative structure.

Yet the way in which cinematic narratives engage audiences in story involves many more components, particularly where narratives deviate from, or challenge, the classical approaches. The faces, the postures, the minute details of gesture and looks, the eyes, the sounds, the colours, the compositions, the mise-en-scéne, the juxtapositions, the rhythms, the textures … all these combinations of formal elements are in fact the

components that make the cinematic medium its own unique form.[5] Where a cinematic storyteller – initially the screenwriter – seeks to enhance the role of these formal elements as a driving force of the narrative (thereby, in my opinion, striving towards the form's strengths), they often start to have problems with the established forms of the screenplay as a means of articulating their vision. Perhaps this is also as a consequence of a lack of the requisite understanding of the cinematic form's potential.

Throughout the history of film, audio-visually driven filmmakers have struggled with the screenplay. Famously, of course, Jean-Luc Godard shot *Breathless* (France, 1960) without much of a script and on many other of his films often worked from a treatment or outline.[6] Aki Kaurismäki shot *Calamari Union* (Finland 1985) with only a one-page flow diagram.[7] In my own experience, I shot my film, *Brannigan's March* (UK, 2004) on the basis of a short treatment, writing specific dialogue scenes the evening before shooting that scene. Yet despite my own experiments, I keep returning to the trusted format of the standard screenplay.

For those of us who want to move away from the dominant classical narrative approaches, with its emphases on the self assertive, the dramatic, conflict, cause and effect, externalised action, the mutable and the psychologically explicable, how can the screenplay and its conventions be evolved to allow for a different approach? How can the screenplay, and its practices, help those of us who want to tell stories utilising the participatory in us, the undramatic, stillness, coincidence, inner lives, the mutable and the mystical? Importantly, how can the teaching of screenwriting be evolved to allow the screenwriter to access and use modes of storytelling that engage the more transcendent feelings in us by creatively deploying the unique formal qualities of the cinematic medium?

Fortuitously, the digital revolution, and the subsequent democratisation of the means of production and distribution, has come to our aid and, like the Guttenburg Press did for the written word in the Middle Ages, liberated us – at least potentially. For their 2014 film festival, The Sundance Institute received over 4000 feature film entries (for 120 screenings) and over 8500 short film entries (for 65 screenings.[8] In the UK, the British Film Institute first started counting feature films under £500,000 budgets and not distributed by members of the Film Distributors Association in 2011/12 and discovered an additional 350 feature films that normally would not have been counted. We should pay particular attention to the explosion of filmmaking in the developing world. We already know that Bollywood and Nollywood are the two largest film industries in the world in terms of number of films produced. Small countries like Ghana (population 25 million) now produce in excess of 1000 commercially distributed feature films a year. Visits to YouTube and Vimeo will further evidence the explosion in independent filmmaking. Like in literature or music, the distinctions between whether someone has a 'job in the industry' or a formal 'commission' are becoming somewhat irrelevant. New types of companies are emerging to engage with this proliferation: from online broadcasters such as Netflix (netflix.com accessed 10 October 2015) and Amazon Prime (amazon.com accessed 10 October 2015), to aggregator services like Under The Milky Way (us.underthemilkyway.com accessed 10 October 2015), to new opportunities and business models such as Amazon's Studio (studios.amazon.com accessed 10 October 2015) service or MoviePitching (moviepitcher.com accessed 10 October 2015) services for screenwriters.

The idea that in this burgeoning narrative moving image sector, traditional practices in which the screenwriter, director, editor, cinematographer or sound recordist, and others, have clearly delineated roles and responsibilities is well on the way to being undermined.[9]

The terminologies, the roles and responsibilities, as well as the procedures and processes of the film set, are now more difficult to define and teach as they dissipate into fluid and interchanging networks, collaborations and interdisciplinarities. While the history of film is littered with examples of multitasking filmmakers,[10] this idea of the multitasking media professional, including multitasking, or Total Filmmaker, is perhaps more common now than ever. Technology and the democratisation that results from it have created a market place where costs of production and distribution have plummeted. Just like music and publishing before it, the moving image industry is increasingly made up of contributions from creative and entrepreneurial artists and crafts people whose sole source of income does not come from having a protected job within a largely closed industrial system. These artists and crafts people support themselves through a complex woven pattern of activities and form a growing independent sector which, in effect, trains people who enter the industrial mainstream, identifies and supplies the talent and provides the research and innovation that helps refresh and renew the industrial core of the sector.

This growing hinterland of independent production is allowing the Total Filmmaker to emerge more prominently than previously. Necessity is the mother of all invention, so the saying goes, and in this spirit necessity, in the form of cost effectiveness, creative necessity, practical and logistical necessity and, for many, the necessity to rebel against the system, is driving the development of film practices, including creative and narrative practices. We often see in the evolving independent generation – both young and older – people who, interchangeably (either on the same project or from project to project) write, direct, edit, shoot, production design and so on. This is certainly the case with short films[11] and in many independent feature films, too.[12] What impact does this have on screenwriting and the teaching of screenwriting? When we think of the pedagogy of screenwriting, therefore, do we not also need to take account of this changing context? Both in terms of engaging with the narrative form, and in terms of engaging with practices,[13] can the screenwriter actually separate themselves out into their own discrete discipline?

The middle: practicing total filmmaking

By looking very briefly at a couple of examples from writer-directors and then moving on to look at my own practice in my film, *The Raven On The Jetty* (UK 2015), I hope to expand on this idea of the Total Filmmaker and its potential impact on screenwriting. Robert Bresson and Francis Ford Coppola provide contrasting ways in which writer-directors have written and worked with screenplays, subsequently directing what they have written. Indeed, the very way their screenplays have been written reflects contrasting working methods and attitudes to the cinematic form; for example, in their contrasting approaches to the screen performer. Where Bresson worked with the ideas of models performing precise, repetitive actions whose very minimalism allows us to enter into the indefinable almost spiritual qualities of characters, Coppola worked very much within the performative tradition in which external expression in face and actions reveals psychological understandings of characters and their motivations.

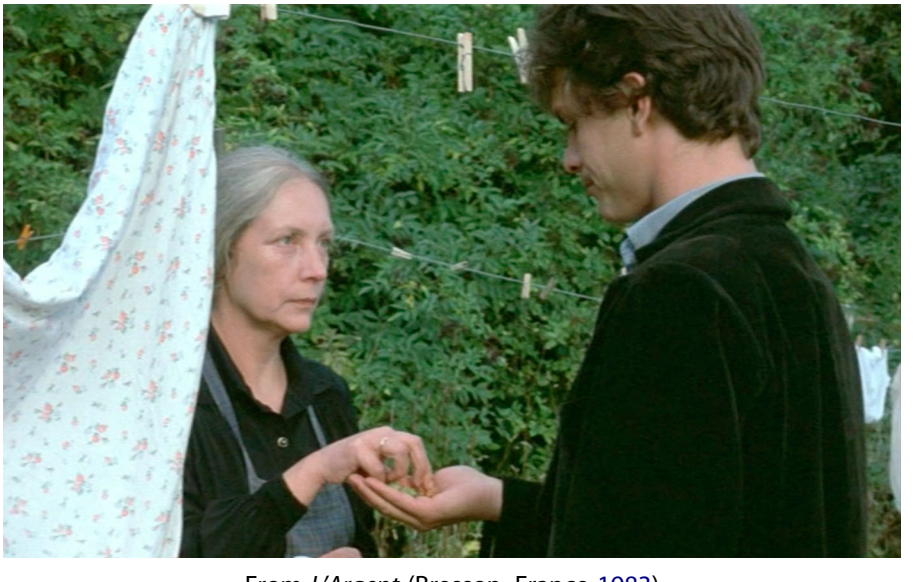
Bresson's *L'Argent* (France 1983) is perhaps the ultimate expression of his cinematic philosophy.[14] His disciplined minimalism, perhaps better described as visual piety; his precise approach to movement; his studious observation of details of body parts, such as hands and feet (the main vehicles of our physical actions); his evocative capturing of looks and

looking; his insistent rejection of performance; the rigorous complementarity of picture and sound; they are all formal qualities that are critical to the telling of his stories. The inimitable audio visual unity of the film leads the emotional and feeling engagement with the themes of the film. They are inextricably imbedded in the form itself and not just in the dramaturgical performance of the actor/characters as captured by camera and sound recorder. Bresson is, essentially, making a cinematic performance rather than capturing a human performance. Knowing his intentions, he adapted the screenplay accordingly:[15]

469. M.S. Yvon bites one and carries the others in the palm of his hand. He catches up quickly (leaves frame) with the woman.	Nuts being eaten. Yvon's steps.
470. M.S. The woman by the barrow full of washing. Yvon (enters frame) brings her the nuts. She eats one while taking up the barrow and setting off again (Leaves frame).	Yvon's steps. Eating of nuts. Wheelbarrow.
471. W.S. The woman pushing the barrow and Yvon following her (enter frame) stop by the washing line. The woman spreads out the washing while Yvon (pan) empties his pocketful of nuts which he quickly cracks on a stone and comes (pan) to offer one to the woman. They hang up the washing together while munching the nuts.	Barrow. Eating of hazelnuts.
SHED - NIGHT	
472. M.S. Yvon asleep. He sits up suddenly, waits for a few seconds, throws off the covers and jumps to his feet.	Silence. Yvon's steps.
473. C.U. The axe in the basket on the bench, scarcely visible in the darkness. Yvon's hand (enters frame) takes hold of the axe and Yvon (track back and pan) goes to the door, which he goes through (leaves frame).	
GARDEN AND KITCHEN - NIGHT	
474. M.S. (Camera in the kitchen). Yvon appears silhoetted behind the glass door of the kitchen. He breaks the lock. He enters, pushing the door to behind him, stands motionless for a moment listening. Mirza barks somewhere in the house. Yvon goes forward (leaves frame) resolutely.	Lock. Door. Distant barking of Mirza. Yvon's steps.

This detailed shot by shot screenplay, full of camera instructions and detailed descriptions of character movement in relation to the frame, is a far cry from how we tend to teach screenwriting. It would be easy to dismiss this approach as a director's shooting script – which it indeed is – but it is a reflection of how Bresson's formalistic philosophy and approach is guiding how he writes his screenplay. The line between director, writer and, indeed, editor is somewhat blurred. The writer in him, the director in him and the editor in him need to work together to conceive the form as the narrative only works in its holistic context. It is difficult to read this screenplay and get any sense of the power of the final film, largely because the dramaturgy of conflicting characters is not what is really driving this narrative.

From *L'Argent* (Bresson, France 1983)



From *L'Argent* (Bresson, France 1983)

From *L'Argent* (Bresson, France 1983)

One could perhaps imagine how an investor, a producer, or a script editor with little knowledge of Bresson's visual style, approach and philosophy, would fail to understand the holistic cinematic potential of this narrative. Rather than emphasising the dramaturgical conflicts, character arcs and so on, that we have come to expect jumping from the pages of a screenplay, Bresson has focused on giving us as many of the directorial and editing components as he can reasonably provide on paper.

Contrast this with Francis Ford Coppola's approach to writing the screenplay, which is clearly steeped in the dramaturgy of the classical Hollywood tradition. His screenplay for his acclaimed film *The Conversation* (1973) illustrates how the screenplay has been reduced to simply describing the basic setting, actions and, importantly, the dialogue. Where Bresson has minimal dialogue as a narrative driver, Coppola's narrative depends a lot on what is said (and, contrapuntally, what is not said):

```
INT. THE ROOM. NIGHT.
  [...]
  The bathroom door opens. Harry steps out, staring at her.
                        HARRY
                  Why are you singing that?
                        AMY
                  It's pretty.
                        HARRY
                  Why that song?
                        AMY
                  What's the matter Harry?
                        HARRY
                   Someone else was singing that song
                   today.
                         AMY
                   A girl?
```

HARRY
Yes.
AMY
(playfully)
Now I'm jealous. Who is she?
HARRY
I don't know her ... I ... it's
something else.
AMY
You never told me where you work
Harry.
HARRY
Different places. Different jobs.
I'm a musician. A freelance
musician.
AMY
Do you live alone Harry?
HARRY
Why are you asking me questions all
of a sudden?
AMY
It's your birthday ... I want to
know about you.
HARRY
Yes, I live alone, but I don't want
to answer any more questions.
He moves to the kitchenette; we can feel that he doesn't want to stay here
any more.
HARRY
Your rent is due this week.
She doesn't answer.

Here we see the classic example of how the screenplay is reduced to the bare dramaturgy of character dialogue and very very basic actions. Nowhere is there even a hint of the formal cinematic elements, nor, importantly for this discussion, the complex behavioural actions undertaken by the characters in this scene.

From *The Conversation* (Coppola 1973)

From *The Conversation* (Coppola 1973)

From *The Conversation* (Coppola 1973)

The complex conflict that exists between Harry and Amy, in which he seeks to have sex with her, and she seeks to find out more about the real man, is visually played out in their physical interactions. His constant attempts to kiss her; her constant attempts to avoid the kissing, in part through eating a biscuit. The screenplay suggests the conflict on one level, but that intimate physical interaction is not explicitly suggested in the screenplay.[16] While Bresson's final film does deviate very subtly from the screenplay, there is an attempt to describe as much of the detail as possible. In contrast, Coppola's screenplay leaves out almost all the visual and behavioural detail, which clearly reflects the way that he works with his performers in creating the final scene.

> A screenplay has to be like a haiku. It has to be very concise and very clear, minimal. When you go to make it as a film, you have the suggestions of the actors, which are going to be available to you, right? You're going to listen to the actors because they have great ideas (Interview with Francis Ford Coppola. Accessed May 8, 2015. http://99u.com/articles/6973/Francis-Ford-Coppola-On-Risk-Money-Craft-Collaboration).

The knowledge and experience of working with actors enables Coppola to fashion a minimalist screenplay that he knows will come to life through a collaborative process with actor, cinematographer, editor and so on. The screenplay seems almost to focus entirely on dialogue. In contrast, Bresson's film existed in his mind's eye, complete, almost, and the process of writing the screenplay was to capture as much of that as possible. In both cases, the life force of the film exists away from the page and forms itself only when all of the formal elements of the work finally come together.

In my own recent film, *The Raven On The Jetty* (UK 2015), the formal elements played the most important aspects of telling the story, not least because the main character, Thomas, only speaks once. One example of this was the relationship between space, location, time and character. I was seeking to create narrative spaces into which the viewer places their own life experience in order to complete the narrative. Rather than projecting narrative information to move the audience, I was seeking to work with the negative spaces that sought to invite the viewer in, to engage their participatory feelings, rather than their self assertive emotions.[17] This was an experiential narrative strategy that often involved long lingering shots, abandoned spaces in the composition, the sensation of the sound scape and the trance-like rhythm of the editing. This, of course, presents challenges for the screenplay. The only time Thomas speaks in the film is during a five-minute long shot in which he is completely on his own:

47. EXT. DECIDUOUS WOODS. MORNING.

THOMAS seems so small, surrounded by tall and substantial deciduous trees. Parts of the undergrowth are thick and roots and branches have to be negotiated. There is nothing but the woods to be seen and no paths and there is a lingering mist.

He is slowly venturing forward through the woods. He looks around him, nervously. Once or twice he will stop to listen, uncertainly, or a twig will break, causing him to jump or stop. Up ahead, he can hear large wing flaps and the cry of a couple of Ravens. He seems to be following this sound.

Suddenly, he stops. Up ahead, he can see a Raven on the ground. It seems to be pecking away at something. Occasionally, the Raven will pause to look around.

As Thomas gets closer, he hesitates. The Raven, too, pauses its pecking at something on the ground. There is a standoff; Thomas is a little reticent to move forward and the Raven is reluctant to give up what is clearly a meal.

Thomas decides to be brave. He takes a few cautious steps forward and eventually the Raven flies off. Once it has flown off, Thomas moves forward to see what the Raven was pecking away at.

Leaning over the spot, he is horrified at what he sees and has to step back for a moment: a dead and severely mauled carcass of a Budgie. He leans forward, cautiously, to have a closer look.

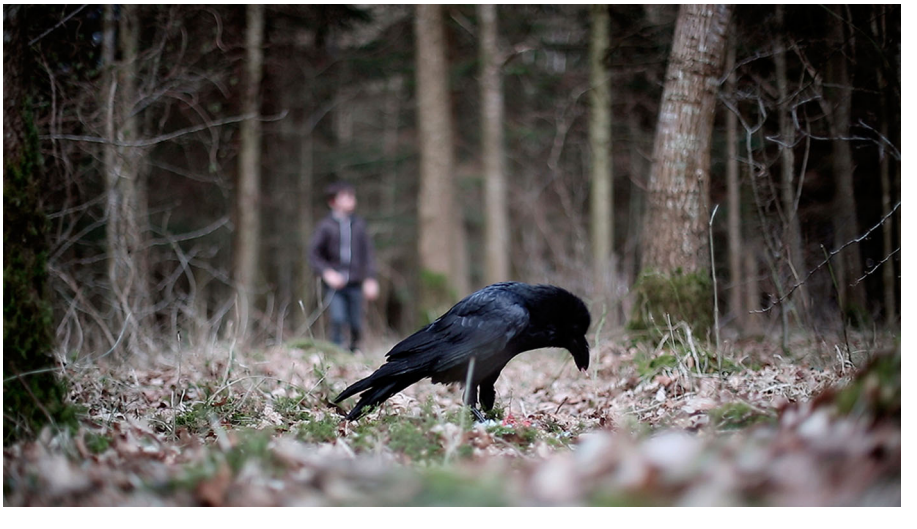
Hearing the cry of a Raven above, Thomas suddenly picks up a nearby stick and hurls it angrily in the direction of the Raven's cry. He then returns to looking at the dead and mutilated carcass of the Budgie. He kneels down next to it.

After a few moments of studying it, he gets an idea. He rummages nearby for a stick and starts digging a hole in the ground next to the Budgie. After a considerable scraping effort, a hole appears. Using the stick, Thomas scoops the carcass of the Budgie into the hole, then uses the same stick to scoop the earth across the Budgie, burying it. He smooths out the earth to make it look as nice as possible, then throws the stick away.

He finds another, thinner, stick nearby and sticks that on the grave as an ornament. He looks at his handy work for a moment or two. He then folds his hands and closes his eyes, tight:

THOMAS
(half whisper)
Our Father, who lives in Heaven, eh ...
(Hesitates) Our Father, who lives in Heaven, eh ... Give me ... Give us ...
(Hesitates) Our Father, who lives in Heaven ...

Thomas gives up and opens his eyes and looks at the little grave and stick monument.



From *The Raven On The Jetty* (Erik Knudsen, UK 2015)

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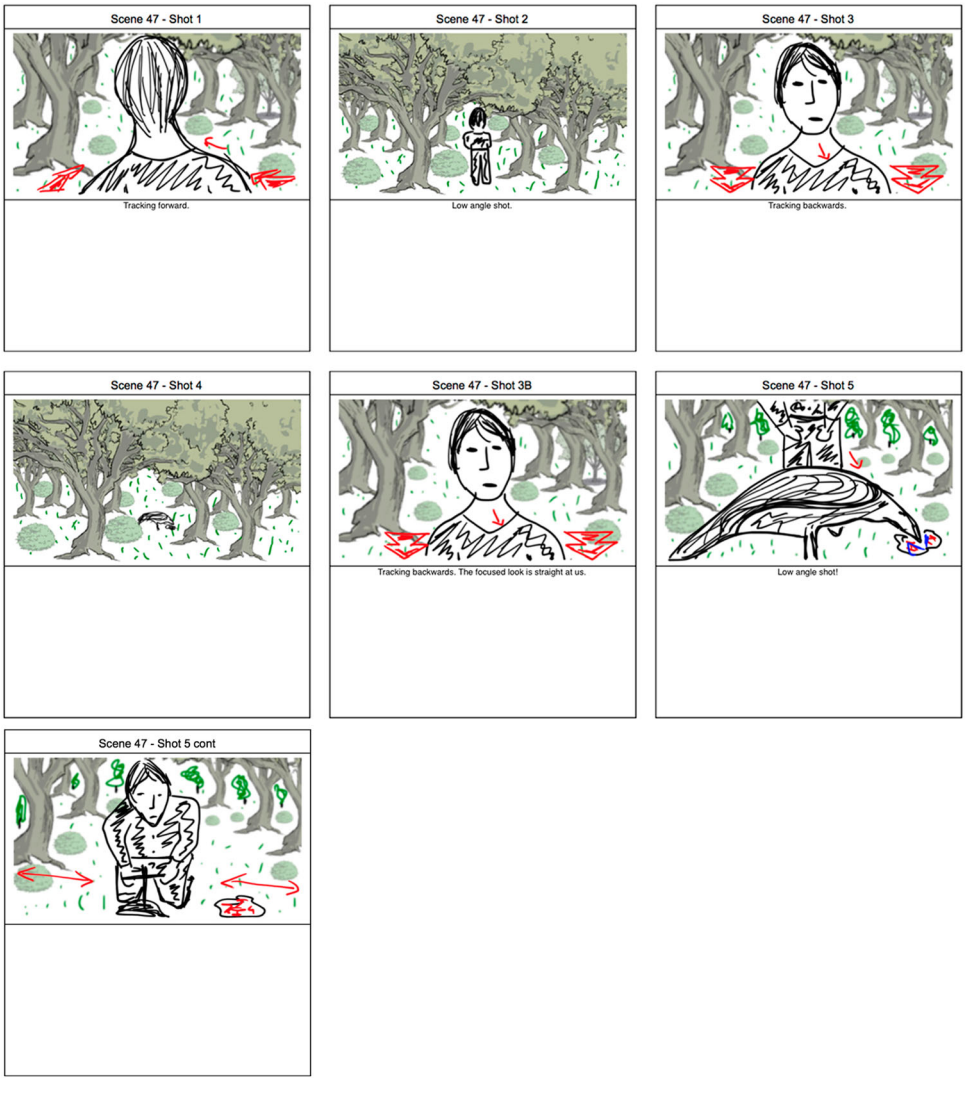

The subtlety and detail of looks, actions, gestures, hesitations, the subtlety of the sound, the pregnancy of the empty spaces vacated, the shifting natural light phenomena at fortuitous moments – all go into the creation of the scene. Yet most of the screenplay is dedicated to describing the dramaturgical components, of which there are few, and one could perhaps be forgiven for thinking that this is a poor screenplay.[18] Nevertheless, as a screenwriter, I attempted to include as much as is possible without turning into a novelist.

Is it a coincidence that so much literature is the source for the screenplays that eventually appear on our screens? Could it be that those making decisions can 'see' the film when reading literature and that they need that assurance,[19] that reference point that allows them to imagine the film? These same decision makers also want to know who the director is going to be, the cinematographer, the editor, the designer, from whose previous works they will start to build a picture of the final film. In these instances the

screenplay becomes dominated by concerns of character (as defined through basic actions, reactions, decisions and dialogue) and narrative structure. Because I am also going to direct and edit, I am able to fill the gaps and write the screenplay in such a way as to recognise the importance of all the other cinematic components that go into making a film. The end result may be that I end up with a screenplay that the reader does not get, does not understand or does not see because their own experience of screenplays is based on the values of a particular paradigm.

During the making of *The Raven On The Jetty* (Knudsen 2015),[20] the screenplay was used sparingly. Actors saw the screenplay once, as part of the process of them agreeing to take part in the film, and then never saw it again. The screenplay was then used by the crew for planning purposes, but once storyboards had been created, the screenplay was rarely used.[21]

The storyboards formed the basis of all the notes for shooting and the basis on which the first assembly cut was shaped. The screenplay in that sense marks a certain part of a journey; a stage where narrative structure and dramaturgical structure were paramount. Like Bresson's way of working, the film was in my mind's eye, though, as with Coppola, it would be shaped, refined and developed by my interactions with the creative contributors.[22] My writing of the screenplay, however, was guided by the director and editor in me. Additionally, the use of sound was very important at the screenplay stage; certain character information and narrative information was conveyed specifically through the tensions and interactions between picture and sound.[23] For example, certain sound effects, textures and rhythms that I knew would be important in conveying character feeling and decisions were incorporated into the writing of the screenplay. Decisions about what we see and what we don't see; what scenes are necessary and in which order; what needs to be said and what could be conveyed through sound or looks; all these considerations were influenced by my understanding of how I wanted to incorporate aural and visual components in the film. Even the very narrative structure was guided by this interplay between the writer, director and editor in me.

Consequently, the writing of the behaviour of my characters and what they say was hugely influenced by my directorial and editing intentions. One example was that my directorial intention to use eyes and eye lines in particular ways influenced my decisions about how I would develop scenes, actions and dialogue.[24] As did my use of what I term pregnant spaces; the lingering spaces vacated by a character can powerfully convey feeling and emotions and in such cases it allowed me to move away from seeking suggestive performances or gestures from my characters.

All these considerations have been part of the ongoing shaping of my attitude to screenwriting and its role in developing and fostering cinematic expression. In the case of cinematic expression that moves away from the dominance of the drama as the foundation for the telling of the story, the screenplay as a format becomes problematic. This is an issue, because all the major institutions tend to rely on this format as the most appropriate way of expressing and evaluating a cinematic intention. For the Total Filmmaker working in an environment where traditional structures and processes are being reshaped, and where creative and entrepreneurial independence drives new sectors within a pluralising industry, the screenplay written by a person removed from the rest of the production process may gradually become a thing of the past. After all, the screenwriter, the director, and the editor are all engaged in the same thing: telling a story cinematically.

What are the possible implications for this kind of thinking on how we might teach, or encourage the learning of, screenwriting?

The end: teaching for change

Even if it is the intention of someone to concentrate on writing screenplays, I would still be inclined to approach their education in screenwriting on the basis of the Total Filmmaker. The more the screenwriter can confidently incorporate the considerations of the director and editor (indeed, the sound designer, too) in shaping the screenplay, the more likely the writer will be able to shape the screenplay in such a way that it utilises as much of the formal cinematic elements as possible. My assessment has always been that what distinguishes cinema from TV drama is that the TV drama uses the camera to primarily capture performances of actors, where these performances are actually the main drivers of the narrative expression; whereas the cinematic film uses all the components – visuals, sounds, rhythms, textures, editing, etc. – to make a new performance which doesn't exist outside of itself. It is a question of leaning one way or the other.[25] The screenplay, as it is currently predominantly used, lends itself as particularly suited to the drama. We are tending to reinforce the propensity towards drama, particularly in the Anglo-Saxon film tradition, in the way that we teach screenwriting and use the paradigm of this form of screenwriting as the way in which we evaluate the potential quality of a film. And, as Von Trier suggests, a film must be alive:

> The problem is that a director who turns to a writer comes with an idea for something that has more or less of a heart. And one thing is certain: that when it has been through this very quick dramaturgical treatment there is no longer a heart. Then it is extremely superficial. (Lars von Trier qtd. in Schepelern 2005, 28)

How do we therefore start to encourage the cinematic screenwriter – the writer who understands how to infuse all of the cinematic components into a screenplay? I have suggested that it is already happening outside of academia, but within academia we are often reinforcing tradition and structures that mitigate against the idea of the Total Filmmaker, who may or may not decide to focus on screenwriting. From departmental structures, separate screenwriting programmes, to programmes and teaching divided according to traditional working practices, our film education may actually work against the idea that it is possible for each participant involved in making a film to have a deep rooted understanding of all aspects of how a film tells a story.

At Bournemouth University, I have had the privilege of contributing to the development of a new film programme, led by James Fair:

> The Film programme aims to produce graduates who engage in the world with interest, insight, intellectual curiosity and ethical awareness. These attributes will allow them to work as creative, collaborative, flexible and confident practitioners in order to contribute to and shape the present and future international film industries. (From BA [Hons] Film Programme Specification Form, James Fair for Bournemouth University)

There is no mention in the aims, or objectives, about students being screenwriters, directors, editors, cinematographers and so on. Three key strands – first, history and language of film; second, storytelling; and third creative entrepreneurship – underpin the journey of the student through the programme and gradually these strands find

the form of particular practices, such as screenwriting. Theory and practice are not separated out into separate modules, but are integrated so that applied theory and practice are inseparable within each module. Every module, therefore, incorporates both practice and applied theory. The programme has its roots in the cinematic traditions and sits alongside existing programmes in Media Production, Television Production and Scriptwriting. In a sense, the Film programme is responding to the explosion in independent film across the world and recognises that what was once essentially a closed industry for the few is now a fully democratised expressive form spawning new industries, practices and institutions. Irrespective of these changes and developments, I believe it necessary for the screenwriter, director and editor to fully engage and integrate in order to make full use of what the medium has to offer.[26]

Traditionally, screenwriting programmes focus on writing. Some even sit within creative writing departments. From time to time, many programmes bring in some production components and collaborative opportunities to expose the screenwriters to the broader practice of film production. Nevertheless, writers are often seen as separate, somehow belonging to a different area altogether, and for the cinematic film, this can only be problematic. The screenwriter, director and editor should be thought of as one role; one role that may be carried out in practice by three different people collaborating. If separated out into different people, each person nevertheless needs to fully understand what aspects of that single role that the others are involved with and how that impacts on the specific tasks they have in hand. Our teaching and learning of screenwriting should ideally reflect this, as I believe it will enhance our ability to create films that fully utilise the strengths of the cinematic medium to tell stories that engage us in diverse ways.

Postscript: open sources

> Once the film exists, the screenplay is no more. Everyone knows that when shooting is over, screenplays generally end up in studio waste-baskets. (Carrière 1994, 26)

In the article, *The Aesthetic Independence of the Screenplay*, Koivumäki raises the intriguing question of whether the screenplay could one day take on an independence in the same way that a stage play has an independent life beyond its original performance (2010, 26). It is an interesting thought that could change the way we think of screenwriting. It wouldn't negate the need for a screenwriter to be fully immersed in the language of film, but could change the status of the screenwriter and their role in the production process. The digital era is throwing up challenges to the traditional view of copyright and the birth of such notions as Creative Commons (Accessed October 23, 2015. http://creativecommons.org) does open up the potential prospect of more open licensing of screenplays. It would need a change of mentality about notions of exclusivity, particularly given everyone's concern about how to make a living in a world where everything is abundant and increasingly free. However, we already see signs of the breakdown of exclusivity in film distribution strategies and Amazon Studios' open access approach to script development is one example of the breaking down of the traditional notion that a screenplay has to be a closely guarded secret before it is made. Could this be the beginning of a change of status and attitude towards the screenplay? Could one imagine a screenwriter making their screenplay open source in the way that Tesla, with their battery inventions, and Toyota, with their hydrogen technology inventions, make their patents open source?

Notes

1. Both managed the Ajax football team and Michels also managed the Dutch national football team in the 1970s.
2. See, for example, Planck (2015).
3. See, for example, Murdoch (1989).
4. Knudsen (2005) in which I question the then UK Film Council's approach to developing screen talent.
5. There are many examples of narrative films in which the dramaturgy driven performer is a very minor part of how the story is told: from Michael Snow's Wavelength (Canada 1967) to Mojtaba Mirtahmasb's *This is Not a Film* (Iran 2011).
6. See Jill Murphy's discussion of this (2012).
7. See Raija Talvio's (2014) discussion of this experience from the perspective of someone directly involved.
8. The 2014 Sundance Institute rejection letters proudly announced these facts as part of their consolation.
9. When presenting a keynote speech at the Legon Film Event in Accra, Ghana, in 2013, I shared a panel with Kwah Ansah, one of the grandees of Ghanaian film, educated in Europe and America. He expressed dismay at how the new Ghanaian film entrepreneurs had not been trained properly and cited their use of the term 'passport shot' instead of 'close up' as an example of a decay in the film sector. However, it's too late; these 'uneducated' film entrepreneurs *are* the new industry and, in Ghana, they have completely overturned the old order.
10. Whether Chaplin also composing music, or Dreyer doing his own production design, or Cronenberg and Tarkovsky doing their own shooting, not to speak of the many director-editors and writer-directors. Indeed, there are also many examples of the Total Filmmaker, such as the Turkish filmmaker Nuri Bilge Ceylan, who write, shoot, produce, direct and edit their own work.
11. See the work of the film company, Calavera Café Productions at http://www.calaveracafe.com/index.html or the work of Mark Duggan at http://www.markdugganfilms.com.
12. One of the finest examples of this is the work of Turkish filmmaker, Nuri Bilge Ceylan: http://www.nuribilgeceylan.com.
13. It is tempting to use the word professional; however, this term is increasingly meaningless in the context of contemporary film and media practices. If that word were used in the context of music, literature or photography, for example, it would be considered somewhat old fashioned or embarrassing and awkward.
14. And he was recognised that year with a Palm D'Or from Cannes.
15. This English translation of Bresson's original screenplay for *L'Argent* is courtesy of Roger Crittenden from the National Film and Television School, Beaconsfield, who shared a copy of a gift he received directly from Robert Bresson.
16. I have often used this scene as an exercise for student directors. Almost all the students fail to create any physical interaction between the characters and end up having a static dialogue between the characters. They are then amazed to see what Coppola and the actors have done visually.
17. See (Knudsen)
18. I have a friend in script development with a leading UK institution with whom I have had a number of discussions about the qualities of screenplays. Using their definitions, my screenplay would not be considered a strong screenplay, yet they were moved to tears by the film.
19. Quite apart from the assurance that the story has already been tested in the market place.
20. The making of *The Raven On The Jetty* (Knudsen 2015) was documented in a series of 30 Video Blogs, from concept to final preview screening, which can be seen at theravenonthejetty.com.
21. From *The Raven On The Jetty Production Scrapbook for the Film and DVD* (Knudsen 2015). This is the same scene referred to in the screenplay sample and the screen grab samples.
22. As a writer, director and editor, I use a group of half a dozen or so advisors. These are advisors that are not part of the film, but who have a range of experiences of film producing, directing and editing. In one or two cases, they are not involved in film production at all. These advisors

are people whose opinions I value and they advise me at the screenplay stage and editing stage, helping me to add an element of detachment.

23. In order to fully think out the implications of sound on my characters and their actions, I discussed ideas with my sound designer during the writing of the screenplay.
24. See (Knudsen 2014).
25. In the extreme, a cinematic film can tell a story without characters, while the drama cannot.
26. When Head of the Editing Department at Escuela Internacional de Cine y Television in Cuba between 2001 and 2008, I designed the programme in such a way that students would have workshops led by directors, screenwriters, sound designers and music composers, in addition to their more traditional editing workshops, in order to immerse them in the total language of film.

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Notes on contribution

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He is also visiting professor, and the former Head of the Editing Department, at the Escuela Internacional de Cine y Television in Cuba and at Multimedia University, Malaysia. He is chair of the Editorial Board of the Journal of Media Practice and a member of the Arts and Humanities Research Council's Peer Review College and chairs the board of Trustees at Square Chapel Arts Centre in Halifax, UK. He publishes widely on film practice, including *Creative Documentary: Theory and Practice*. He is currently leading the Story Lab International Research Network, funded by the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council.

As a filmmaker his films include: *The Raven On The Jetty* (88 min. fiction, 2015), *The Silent Accomplice* (84 min. fiction, 2011), *Vainilla Chip* (17 min. Documentary, 2009), *Veil* (for Horse & Bamboo Theatre Company's touring show, 2008), *Heart of Gold* (40 min. documentary, 2006), *Sea of Madness* (86 min. fiction, 2006), *Brannigan's March* (99 min. fiction, 2004), *Bed of Flowers* (50 min. documentary, 2001), *Signs of Life* (70 min. fiction, 1999), *Reunion* (50 min. documentary, 1995), *One Day Tafo* (70 min. documentary, 1991).

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